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Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture, and building solidarity between young people of developing and developed countries.

All human beings are equal in dignity and therefore deserve respect, opportunity, and the freedom to use their abilities and talents. Countries and communities may take different paths to reach the goal of social inclusion, but when people understand human dignity — the intrinsic and equal value of every human being — they strive to create conditions that include everyone and enable them to thrive. Therefore, human dignity must be at the foundation of our efforts.

This human dignity-centered approach is reflected in the well-established principle that development must be person-centered. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis on which to found policies and laws that create conditions under which human beings can flourish. Therefore, we should respect every human being and work together in solidarity to ensure that every human being is included in our efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

Person-centered development is grounded in human dignity and focuses on empowering people. Policies based on human dignity recognize each person's ability to contribute to, not just benefit from, development. Human creativity and hard work have driven innovation, improving living conditions for countless people. Policies grounded in human dignity prioritize basic health care (SDG 3), education and vocational training (SDG 4), and good governance and infrastructure (SDG 16) that will give people access to various forms of capital that enable them to drive development. Policies that treat persons as part of a problem to be solved rather than participants in development ultimately detract from these essential efforts.

Each person has a right to the highest attainable standard of health. Health affects individuals' participation in the work and social spheres. Poor health can detract from the ability to receive an education and hurt one's ability to participate in the workforce and the life of the community. Ensuring that everyone has access to good healthcare should be part of social protection policies.

Good health requires not only medical care, but also clean water, sanitation, good nutrition, psychological well-being and the education necessary to comprehend medical advice and make informed decisions. Vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and conflict-affected populations are disproportionately affected by lack of access to healthcare and education. Therefore, they deserve responses that meet their needs and enable them to participate fully in the life of society.

Human dignity must be at the foundation of healthcare. People need to be able to understand their bodies and their options in order to exercise informed consent. They should not be denied healthcare based on considerations such as race, class, disability status, or age. And all treatments and services must respect the values and dignity of all human beings. World Youth Alliance encourages Member States not to impose as healthcare products and procedures that fail to respect patients' consciences, or which violate human dignity.

Quality education must be available to all on an equal basis and should flow from an authentic understanding of the human person, and foster respect for elf and others in solidarity. Parents bear the primary responsibility for educating their children and should be supported in this role by the state.

World Youth Alliance has developed a curriculum that can help promote respect, responsible behavior, and equality between men and women. The Human Dignity

Curriculum (HDC) teaches children about human dignity: that every human being has it and should therefore be respected. The program is culturally sensitive and encourages parental involvement.

Students who understand human dignity are not only prepared to make responsible personal decisions, but to contribute to their communities and to treat others with respect in their families, peer groups, and communities, including in their personal relationships. The lessons they learn about solidarity, excellence, and respect encourage them to examine their actions and responsibilities to themselves and others. With these lessons in mind, they can promote authentic development, inclusive policies, and fair workplace practices.

The HDC also has a sexuality education extension. This program teaches age-appropriate, biologically accurate information with a focus on personal development and informed decisions related to students' sexuality based on an understanding of themselves, and with respect for their own human dignity and the dignity of others. This can help girls and boys form healthy, respectful relationships and resist peer pressure.

Young people who understand human dignity are not only prepared to make responsible personal decisions, but to contribute to their communities and to treat others with respect in their families, peer groups, and communities, including in their personal relationships. They will be prepared to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication, not just for themselves, but also for others.

Having good health and sufficient education are key elements of social protection, but they are not the only things people need to thrive. Just fiscal and wage policies that take into account diverse perspectives and views, grounded in the dignity of the person and the fundamental equality of all human beings inherent in that dignity. These policies must be part of a larger effort to facilitate equal access to various forms of capital. By opening these forms of capital up to everyone, we can create new opportunities among diverse groups for innovation which can meet more and various needs, not only through social entrepreneurship but new business, research, and investment.

Michael Fairbanks, an advisor to President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, identified seven forms of capital that people need access to in order to thrive. These are: natural endowments such as location, subsoil assets, forests, beaches, and climate; the financial resources of a nation, such as savings and international reserves; humanly made capital, such as buildings, bridges, roads, and telecommunications assets; institutional capital, such as legal protections of tangible and intangible property, efficient government departments, and firms that maximize value to shareholders and compensate and train workers; knowledge resources, such as international patents, and university and think tank capacities; human capital, which represents skills, insights and capabilities; and culture capital, which means not only the explicit articulations of culture like music, language, and ritualistic tradition, but also attitudes and values that re linked to innovation.

Institutional capital aligns closely with Goal 16, and is critical to ensuring the access to the other forms of capital. In countries where corruption is widespread, the poor and those in vulnerable situations often cannot afford to exercise their rights. Those with inadequate or overbearing regulations make it impossible to start new enterprises, often leading to concentration of power and wealth. A lack of good infrastructure inhibits successful entrepreneurship. These issues will always have the most limiting effect on those at the margins.

However, countries that invest in just and accountable institutions and good infrastructure management can bring about lasting change. Eliminating bribery puts

more people on an equal footing. Regulatory schemes that are reasonable and intelligible to the ordinary person can protect resources from misuse while guaranteeing access to those resources by anyone with a good idea and the willingness to work for it. Creating systems that are just and accountable will increase their use by those most likely to be excluded. And it will give everyone a voice in developing the policies they want in place to ensure that everyone can be a participant in fostering development, including through fiscal and wage policies.

Human beings are our greatest resource. As the world of work continues to grow and change it is important to ensure that we include all people in all spheres of life. By grounding our efforts in human dignity and building person-centered policies, we can equip all human beings to be problem-solvers. Thus empowered, everyone can contribute to the development of their communities using their unique capacities and gifts.

World Youth Alliance urges the Commission to promote policies based on human dignity which ensure that all people have access to healthcare, quality education, and just and accountable institutions to ensure that they have access to the various forms of capital to promote inclusion and equality.